Miranda Pederson

Medieval practice

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Thank you for your well-reasoned editorial about the number of innocent people condemned to death in America, and the public's growing distrust of a flawed death penalty system (2/7). Wrongful convictions, however, are not the only problems evident with this medieval practice. The system is arbitrary, unjust and riddled with inconsistencies. Death sentences are doled out overwhelmingly to poor defendants and racial minorities who kill whites. More than 90 percent of executions since the death penalty was reinstated in 1977 have taken place in states of the former Confederacy--what's called the Death Belt. While proponents claim that the death penalty deters crime, no study has ever demonstrated this. State killing is revenge, pure and simple. As you pointed out, a sentence of life without possibility of parole protects society and stops the cycle of violence. We commend the Catholic Church for its leadership on this issue, and look forward to the day when the government no longer stoops to the crime for which it punishes the perpetrator. To quote Bishop Gabino Zavala, auxiliary bishop of Los Angeles, "The power to take a life is God's."

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